



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **MSGA remains uneasy after Board of Livestock Listening Session**

HELENA- Representatives from the MT Board of Livestock (BOL) made it very clear to Winter Fair attendees, last week, that split-state status for brucellosis is not off the table. On Friday, January 25th, during the Montana Winter Fair in Lewistown, the BOL held a listening session to discuss some of the many issues facing the livestock industry. The Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA), along with roughly 30 other industry stakeholders and producers, participated in the listening session, which left many wondering if the BOL listened at all.

“Just to clarify, split-state status is not off the table, it is still an option,” stated Stan Boone, a BOL cattle representative from Ingomar. Jan French, a BOL pork representative from Hobson, completely agreed with the statement made by Boone.

This baffled the audience as Governor Brian Schweitzer had previously stated, “I’m done,” when questioned about his passionate desire to keep pursuing split-state status. The Governor’s response came almost two weeks after his appointed majority board of livestock, reluctantly passed a motion to support individual herd management plans and to pursue risk management strategies other than split-state status for brucellosis. As such, the board is now considering best herd management practices (BHMP), a proposal that MSGA policy supports, but with better cooperation from Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to establish a more statistically sound risk assessment of brucellosis infected elk. A better risk assessment is needed from FWP in order for producers to voluntarily develop scientifically sound BHMPs.

Bill Myers, MSGA Cattle Health Committee member, was one of the few in attendance at the listening session, “It is apparent that some board members don’t understand that they work for and are to take direction from the livestock industry,” he said. “The industry finances the department of livestock and it seems as though some board members do not understand what that means. Those board members are not being straight forward with the industry.”

MSGA still stands firm in its opposition to split-state status for brucellosis in Montana. Proper development of BHMPs is going to take time, diligence, and industry fortitude. MSGA remains committed to working with Department of Livestock animal health officials, producers in the Greater Yellowstone Area, and all other required parties to develop comprehensive, scientifically sound BHMPs. The entire BOL must be united and not divided on their decision to move forward with industry-driven, proactive alternatives to split-state status for brucellosis in Montana.

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*The Montana Stockgrowers Association, a non-profit organization representing nearly 2,500 members, strives to serve, protect and advance the economic, political, environmental and cultural interests of cattle producers, the largest sector of Montana’s number one industry agriculture.*